

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY 5TH JUNE 2024

Minutes of the meeting of the **POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE** held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, School Aycliffe Lane, Newton Aycliffe on Wednesday 5th June 2024 at 7.00pm.

PRESENT

Councillor Arun M. Chandran (Chairman)

Tony Armstrong, Martin Ashcroft, Lindsey Aston, Neil Collinson, George Gray, Ian Gray, Brian Haigh, Phillip Hawkins, Andy Hill, Jed Hillary, Sandra Kirby, Brian McAnaney, John Moore, Carl Robinson, Ken Robson, Michael Stead, Anne Woodward and John Woodward.

OFFICIALS

Mr. D. Austin (Town Clerk)

Mrs. T. Woodhead (Finance Manager)

Ms. A. Donald (Corporate and Policy Officer)

Mrs. S. Stretch (Senior Administration Officer)

IN ATTENDANCE

Three members of the public.

7. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Eddy Adam, Jim Atkinson, Peter Bergg, Dorothy Bowman, John Clark, Sandra Haigh, Wendy Hillary, Joanne Jones and Neville Jones.

8. MEMBERS DISPENSATIONS

No dispensation requests had been received.

9. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Andy Hill declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 8 - Grants and Donations regarding his connections to the Aycliffe Pipe Band.

Councillor Jed Hillary declared an interest in Agenda Item 8 - Grants and Donations regarding his informal connection to the Shine Choir.

10. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions.

11. POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MINUTES

It was proposed by Councillor Andy Hill, seconded by Councillor Neil Collinson and;

RESOLVED - that the minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee, held on the 17th April 2024, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

12. **AUDIT, RISK AND G.D.P.R SUB COMMITTEE MINUTES**

It was proposed by Councillor Martin Ashcroft, seconded by Councillor Ken Robson, and;

RESOLVED - that the minutes of the meeting of the Audit, Risk and G.D.P.R Sub Committee, held on the 16th April 2024, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, and its recommendations and decisions (if any) be agreed.

13. **ACCOUNT CONTROL SHEETS**

Account Control Sheets for the 5th and 19th April 2024 were submitted for approval.

It was proposed by Councillor Ken Robson, and seconded by Councillor Andy Hill, and;

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that the Account Control Sheets for the 5th and 19th April 2024 be received.

14. **GRANTS AND DONATIONS**

The Town Clerk submitted a report setting out the grant and donation requests which had been received since the last meeting.

It was reported that a total of £4,500 is currently available in the Donations Budget, £7,156 in the Community Benefit Fund and £3,000 in the Community Events Grants Budget.

The report also included an update of the Grants and Donations Policy for member's consideration and approval.

The following grant and donation requests were considered:

a) Friends of the Stockton and Darlington Railway

A grant application was received from the Friends of the Stockton and Darlington Railway requesting a £1,000 grant as match funding towards its campaign and bid to the Government's Community Ownership Fund to secure the future of Heighington Station; which is recognised as 'the world's oldest railway station'.

Councillor Martin Ashcroft proposed a grant of £1,000 be given and that the grant be funded from the Community Benefit Fund if possible, as the project had elements relating to the promotion of green travel and carbon reduction.

Councillor Jed Hillary queried that if the required total funds are not raised by the Friends of the Stockton and Darlington Railway, whether the grant monies would be returned to the Council.

The Town Clerk confirmed that this grant would be an appropriate use of the Community Benefit Fund subject to a stipulation being added that the funds be earmarked for the environmental initiatives that are outlined in the bid, and that a stipulation would also be added that if the total amount raised does not meet their target, then the funds be returned to the Council.

It was proposed by Councillor Martin Ashcroft, and seconded by Councillor Ian Gray, and

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that;

- (i) A grant of £1,000 be given, from the Community Benefit Fund to the Friends of the Stockton and Darlington Railway towards the campaign to secure the future of Heighington Station;
- (ii) The funds be earmarked for environmental initiatives outlined in the bid;
- (iii) If the total funds raised by the Friends of the Stockton and Darlington Railway does not reach their requested amount, then the amount be returned to the Town Council.

b) Newton Aycliffe Pipe Band

A grant application was received from the Newton Aycliffe Pipe Band requesting a grant of £11,625 to fund the cost of replacing the band's equipment, instruments and uniforms.

The Town Clerk advised that the grant request was far in excess of the grants budget available and that the Council would need to consider a smaller grant, for example, towards one piece of equipment.

Councillor Carl Robinson proposed that an amount of £500 be given and this was seconded by Councillor Lindsey Aston.

An amendment was proposed by Councillor Martin Ashcroft that a donation be made based on the band's specific itemised requirements and an amount of £475 be given.

Councillor Arun Chandran commented that restricting the grant in this way may not be advisable as the itemised costs could change. Councillor Lindsey Aston further commented that the Pipe Band may have different priorities in terms of the equipment they wish to replace first.

Councillor Martin Ashcroft agreed to withdraw his amendment.

It was proposed by Councillor Carl Robinson, and seconded by Councillor Lindsey Aston, and

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that;

- (iv) A grant of £500 be given to the Newton Aycliffe Pipe Band towards the costs to replace the band's equipment, instruments and uniforms.

c) North East Autism Society

A donation request was received from the North East Autism Society requesting the use of the Sports Complex bowls hall free of charge for a small group of four neurodiverse and autistic learners along with two members of support staff. This would be on a Tuesday afternoon between 1.30pm and 3.30pm, on a date to be agreed.

It was proposed by Councillor Martin Ashcroft and seconded by Councillor Michael Stead, and

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that;

- (v) the North East Autism Society are given free the use of the Sports Complex bowls hall free of charge for a small group of four neurodiverse and autistic learners along with two members of support staff on one Tuesday afternoon between 1.30pm and 3.30pm, on a date to be agreed, with the £34.80 cost of the session to be funded from the Donations Budget and recharged to sports complex income.

d) Vicki Finn-Smith – Newton Aycliffe CrossFit

A donation request was received via a letter from a local CrossFit athlete who is due to compete in the international CrossFit Games in the USA and is raising funds to meet the costs of travelling to and taking part in the games.

Councillor Brian McAnaney asked if Ms Finn-Smith could be requested to include the Town Council crest on her kit as a condition of the donation. This was agreed on the condition that the Council would meet the cost of this, on top of the donation amount.

It was proposed by Councillor Martin Ashcroft, and seconded by Councillor Carl Robinson and;

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that;

- (vi) A donation of £500 be given to Vicki Finn-Smith to meet the costs of travelling to and taking part in the games and officers to ask if the recipient would consider including the Town Council's crest on their kit, with the Council meeting the extra cost.

e) Shine Community Choir

A letter was received from the Shine Community Choir based at St Clare's Church, for a donation towards the costs of establishing a new arts and drama group for the older children in the group, and the possible development of a community youth talent show.

It was proposed by Councillor Martin Ashcroft that an amount of £500 be given, and that officers signpost the Shine Choir group to the Area Action Partnership (GAMP) for additional funding. This was seconded by Councillor Andy Hill.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that;

- (vii) A donation of £500 be given to the Shine Choir towards the costs of establishing a new arts and drama group for the older children in the Shine Choir group and that the group contact GAMP. for further funding.

The Town Clerk added that the Grants and Donations policy had been updated to reflect the suggestions previously made by members in relation to undertaking checks with the Charity Commission in relation to grant and donation requests from registered charities. It was further advised that the opportunity had been taken to undertake a more general review and update of the policy, to remove out of date information.

Councillor Martin Ashcroft suggested that an additional footnote should be included in the policy to reference the conditions on the use of the Community Benefit Fund.

Councillor Jed Hillary suggested a further amendment to the policy to replace the wording: 'requests from registered charities are checked with the Charity Commission' to read: 'requests from registered charities are checked via the Charity Commission website'.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that;

- (viii) That the updated Grants and Donations Policy be approved subject to the suggested changes from members being incorporated.

A letter of thanks was received from Opera Nova.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that;

- (ix) the letter of thanks be received.

15. 2023/24 REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET YEAR-END OUTTURN POSITION

The Finance Manager provided a report to provide Member's with details of the year-end outturn position on the Council's approved Revenue and Capital Budgets for the 2023/24 financial year.

The report also outlined the year-end position on the Council's balances and reserves, loans, investments and debtors.

Members thanked the Finance Manager for a well written and easy to follow report.

The Finance Manager replied to various members' questions in relation to the events and sports complex year end outturn figures and Council balances and reserves.

The Town Clerk provided clarification on the process for asking questions on officer reports, reiterating the need for questions to be raised in advance of the meeting with officers as far as possible, but highlighting that this does not preclude members from asking questions if this is important to the debate and decision. It was proposed by Councillor Martin Ashcroft, and seconded by Councillor Jed Hillary and;

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) the year-end financial position on the Council's 2023/24 Revenue Budgets be received;
- ii) the year-end financial position on the Council's 2023/24 Capital Programme Budgets be received;
- iii) the year-end position on the Council's Balances and Reserves and the proposed allocation of those balances be approved;
- iv) the Revenue Budget and Support Reserve carry forward requests totalling £34,331, be approved;
- v) the VAT Windfall Reserve carry forward request totalling £19,500, be approved;
- vi) the Capital Programme carry forward requests totalling £304,250 be approved to be carried forward meet the costs of deferred and delayed capital projects and provisional sums, be approved;

- vii) the Committee continues to receive quarterly budgetary control reports during the 2024/25 financial year.

16. 2024/25 SERVICE DELIVERY PLAN

The Corporate and Policy Officer submitted the 2024/25 Town Service Delivery Plan for Members' consideration and approval.

Councillor Jed Hillary thanked the Corporate and Policy Officer for the plan, commenting that the range of work that the Town Council undertakes each year always surprises him.

It was proposed by Councillor Jed Hillary, and seconded by Councillor Andy Hill, and;

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) the report be received.
- ii) the 2024/25 Town Council Service Delivery Plan, be approved.

CHAIRMAN.